



**Honorable
Leonard Finz
Class 133-45**

2LT Finz was assigned to Okinawa as part of the 27th Division overseeing the first wave of a planned attack. He was in the Pacific for 32 days when he learned the United States had dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and that the Japanese had surrendered. He was re-routed to the Philippine island of Leyte and tasked with repatriating Filipinos driven from their homes during the war by the Japanese.

He was later appointed Defense Counsel to defend GI's in prison there who were awaiting trial. There was only one lawyer on the island, who had to serve as the prosecutor, and the defense counsel had to be an officer. At the time, Finz had only a high school education, but accepted the task and began reading legal manuals to learn the procedural process, traveling into the jungles at night to gather witnesses and evidence to use in court. His success rate was astounding and after 44 months on active duty he was discharged as a 1LT. He used the GI Bill to attend college and received his law degree from NYU.

Sixty years later (2004) he was officially decorated by the Secretary of the Army at the WWII Veteran's Memorial in Washington D.C., with the Army Commendation Medal and six other medals for his distinguished and meritorious service and outstanding contribution to military justice.

He was elected a State Supreme Court Justice, where he would serve for 13 years before leaving the bench voluntarily to become a partner in a prominent New York City litigation firm. In one of his first trials upon leaving the bench, he scored a verdict in the sum of 1.5 million dollars, the highest medical malpractice verdict at the time. Since then, he has had verdicts in the millions of dollars, combined with settlements in excess of 100 million dollars, and is recognized by the Bar as one of the nation's pre-eminent lawyers.